Sorting Laundry

By Elisavietta Ritchie

Folding clothes,  
I think of folding you  
into my life.

Our king-sized sheets  
like tablecloths  
for the banquets of giants,

pillowcases, despite so many  
washings, seems still  
holding our dreams.

Towels patterned orange and green,  
flowered pink and lavender,  
gaudy, bought on sale,

reserved, we said, for the beach,  
refusing, even after years,  
to bleach into respectability.

So many shirts and skirts and pants  
recycling week after week, head over heels  
recapitulating themselves.

All those wrinkles  
To be smoothed, or else  
ignored; they're in style.

Myriad uncoupled socks  
which went paired into the foam  
like those creatures in the ark.

And what's shrunk  
is tough to discard  
even for Goodwill.

In pockets, surprises:  
forgotten matches,  
lost screws clinking the drain;

well-washed dollars, legal tender  
for all debts public and private,  
intact despite agitation;

and, gleaming in the maelstrom,  
one bright dime,  
broken necklace of good gold

you brought from Kuwait,  
the strangely tailored shirt  
left by a former lover…

If you were to leave me,  
if I were to fold  
only my own clothes,

the convexes and concaves  
of my blouses, panties, stockings, bras  
turned upon themselves,

a mountain of unsorted wash  
could not fill  
the empty side of the bed.(48

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Taylor Rozantz

Ap Literature

December 8, 2009

Poetry Explication

In the poem “Sorting Laundry,” by Elisavietta Ritchie, laundering becomes a thoughtful process of recalling meaningful people and items that are sorted out and put into perspective. Throughout the course of our lives, we are constantly developing the artful skill of decision making. By using and learning various strategies**,** we are able to reflect on wheat would work best. Some decisions are automatic and require little to no thought, such as what to have for breakfast in the morning. Others however, may change the paths of our lives that we have forged for years. Literary **devices** used in “Sorting Laundry” **enhance** the reflection process and further advance the context of the poem by recognizing, identifying, interpreting and analyzing the poem effectively.

While reading literature**, most picture** mentally the events being exposed through the text. Imagery creates a mental picture **needless** of what is happening in the poem. Imagery **describes** what the environment is like **but also** the events or objects **symbolically as well**.

In the first stanza the text reads as, “Folding clothes, / I think of folding you / into my life.” (1-3). As read over those lines, simply picture a person folding clothes, but this image has a much more powerful meaning than a

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simple chore. **“Folding clothes” shows an example of imagery as the texts describe** someone neatly trying to fit that person “into” their lifestyle**. “I think of folding you / into my life.” (1-3).** The text says “Towels patterned orange and green / flowered pink and lavender / gaudy, brought on sale” (10-12)**.** The bright colors of the towels represent youthfulness. The description and the colors of the towels along with the word “gaudy” represent the flashy, showiness and play a part of the couple’s youthfully and playful nature. The phrase, “bought on sale” demonstrates the limited access of funds most youth experience; however, they found beauty in the tasteless item. The text makes reference to maintaining a youthful spirit and outlook on life; refusing to “bleach into respectability” (15). The text also outlines all aspects of laundering and the surprises it unfolds, from the broken necklace, to the well-washed dollars and the strangely tailored shirt left by a former lover.Imagery is a valuable element in literature and connects the reader to the text **by picturing events of details going on in the text in a fulfilling way.** Without picturing, we would have a hard time understanding the material and relating to it.

The tone of a text plays a key in bringing the poem to life. Without tone literature would be dull and boring, like reading a document. Throughout this piece of literature, the text goes through stages of tone shifts. In the beginning the third stanza plays as a reflective tone. “Pillowcases, despite so many / washings, seems still /holding our dreams”(7-9). The description within the poem about our daily usage of articles allows us to remember the importance of each individual item and reminisce. Each item plays a symbol of a past for us to hold dear the memories. The drastic tone shift appears at

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the end when the narrator imagines her life without these items. "A mountain of unsorted wash / could not fill / the empty side of the bed” (46-48). In these lines the texts connects this everyday chore to reality. Clothes get dirty so sorting the laundry is in need to get the job done in an efficient matter. Relationships however is a tedious task, but the loss of one would create a hole of emptiness inside the person.

Like tone, musical devices such as alliteration give the poem life with the different sounds. Musical devices tie in with tone because without the right sounds in the right places within the poem, we would not be able to use the correct tone for the poem.   “Reserved, we said, for the beach / refusing, even after years, / to bleach into respectability”, we see the repeated “ree” sound being made within the words “reserved”, “refusing”, and “respectability” (13-15). We also see the same pattern of repeated sounds “the convexes and concaves” (6). The beginnings of the words both make the same “cee” sound.

Irony is reflected upon the abnormal things we do in life. Irony is used to extend meaning beyond its usage in figure of speech. In the beginning of the poem it is ironic to find the text describing how our character is thinking about marriage while doing a simple household chore such as laundry. She describes that the bright colors of the towels reminds her of her youth and freewill, and while she thinks about becoming alone she pictures just cleaning only her clothes and having no one sleeping on the other side of the bed with her.

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The text shows irony because it shows a different aspect of what the norm would think and feel and how the text describes the emotion.

Techniques and devices are used extensively in the words of literature. With the use of these tools, it enables to understand and connect to a piece of writing. This poem expands thoughts about laundry and brought a new perspective of the process. The clothing and other items laundered holds a separate story each on to its own. This poem can teach that something so simple is much more complex and connects us all with the past, present, and future.

Rozantz 6

Work Cited

Arp, Thomas R., and Greg Johnson. Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and

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Elisavietta Ritchie. “Sorting Laundry” Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and

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While reading literature, most of us picture mentally the events being exposed throughout the text. Imagery creates a mental picture redundant of what is happening in the poem. Imagery describes what the environment is like and the events or objects. In the first stanza the text reads, “Folding clothes, / I think of folding you / into my life.” (1-3). As read over those lines, simply picture a person folding clothes, but this image has a much more powerful meaning than a

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simple chore. The “folding clothes” action is played like someone is neatly trying to fit that person “into” their lifestyle as the text states, “I think of folding you / into my life.”(1-3) also show an example of imagery. The text says “Towels patterned orange and green / flowered pink and lavender /gaudy, bought on sale”. (10-12) The bright colors of the towels represent youthfulness. The description and the colors of the towels along with the word “gaudy” represent the flashy, showiness and play a part of the couple’s youthfully and playful nature. The phrase, “bought on sale” demonstrates the limited access of funds most youth experience; however, they found beauty in the tasteless item. The text makes reference to maintaining a youthful spirit and outlook on life; refusing to “bleach into respectability”.(15) The text also outlines all aspects of laundering and the surprises it unfolds, from the broken necklace, to the well-washed dollars and the strangely tailored shirt left by a former lover. Imagery is a valuable element in literature and connects the reader to the text in a fulfilling way. Without picturing the event of detail of what is going on in the text, we would have a hard time understanding the material and relating to it.

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*Perrine's Literature*. Boston, MA: Thomson Higher Education, 2006. Print.

